

STATEMENT OF
CAPTAIN ROBERT HESSELBEIN, CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE
AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SECURITY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION
HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC
NOVEMBER 1, 2007

AVIATION SECURITY PART II: A FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVE ON THE
NEED FOR ENHANCED HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

Air Line Pilots Association, International
1625 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 797-4033

**STATEMENT OF
CAPTAIN ROBERT HESSELBEIN, CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE
AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SECURITY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION
HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

AVIATION SECURITY PART II: A FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVE
ON THE NEED FOR ENHANCED HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT**

November 1, 2007

Good afternoon. I am Bob Hesselbein, Chairman of the National Security Committee of the Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA). ALPA is the world's largest pilot union, representing more than 60,000 pilots who fly for 41 airlines in the U.S. and Canada. ALPA was founded in 1931 and our motto since its beginning is "Schedule with Safety." We are pleased to have been asked to testify today on the important subject of human resources and equipment as used to enhance aviation security.

There are obviously a great many subjects that could be addressed within this general topic, but today I would like to focus on just two: Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) training and support needs, and secondary barriers on flight decks.

Federal Flight Deck Officer Program

ALPA was the first organization to call for the creation of the Federal Flight Deck Officer (FFDO) program, which became a reality when the Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act (APATA) was enacted as part of the Homeland Security Act of 2002.

The first class of 44 Federal Flight Deck Officers graduated from training in April 2003. Since then, thousands more have joined their ranks and are recognized as key components in the U.S. government's layered approach to protecting the aviation domain. Because the majority of these federal law enforcement officers are ALPA members, the Association has a vested interest in the integrity and viability of the program and remains engaged in a close working relationship with

the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) to ensure the program's continued success.

The FFDO program is unique in that it capitalizes on the willingness of volunteer candidates to protect a critical component of the nation's infrastructure. In order to become an FFDO, a pilot must successfully pass background, psychological and physical requirement vetting, and then complete a rigorous initial training curriculum at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Artesia, NM. Upon so doing, the pilot is deputized as a federal law enforcement officer and, under color of federal law, is empowered to use lethal force to protect the flight decks of passenger and all-cargo transport category aircraft. No other such program exists within the federal law enforcement domain.

From the outset of our support for the FFDO program, we have emphasized that the initiative must select, train and deputize qualified candidates who are chosen from the airline pilot population. We applaud TSA's significant efforts to develop and deploy the FFDO program, and the FAMS' contributions in maintaining and managing it. These successes notwithstanding however, it must be noted that FFDOs are not provided with post-basic training opportunities beyond the need to demonstrate semi-annual weapons proficiency and a brief two-day refresher course after three years of duty.

ALPA has brought this inadequacy to the attention of the TSA/FAMS upon numerous occasions. Although armed pilots have shown tremendous professionalism in the performance of their duties and provide the most wide-spread armed federal security coverage in United States airspace, we remain concerned that their training and mentoring falls short of what other federal officers receive to accomplish their respective missions. It is clear that no other federal law enforcement officers are expected to succeed in their assigned missions without a support structure which includes post-basic-training mentoring and ongoing training.

As an example of this shortcoming, the FFDO's duty to protect the flight deck clearly supports the mission of the Federal Air Marshal Service. However, armed pilots are not trained to work in coordination with FAMs and are generally unprepared to deal with an onboard security event requiring FAM intervention. Determining how to handle an attempted hijacking should not happen at the moment it occurs, but rather during training events on the ground. Response protocols, procedures, and training scenarios should be coordinated between FFDOs and FAMs in advance – the middle of a crisis is not the time to make introductions and determine each other's unique roles. The federal government conducts interagency crisis management exercises on a regular basis. It is only reasonable, therefore, that armed FFDOs should know what to expect from FAMS in the event of an attempted assault on the cockpit, and what the FAMS will expect of them.

FFDOs, by the very nature of their work, operate individually and with little direct supervision. Nearly all communication between them and FAMS program managers is accomplished by secure e-mails which generally incorporate basic advisories or scheduling details. Clearly, this missed opportunity for distance learning, information sharing and mentoring is a program shortcoming. FFDOs should be provided mission-related educational materials using secured-

access libraries. In addition, training opportunities should be provided at local FAMS field offices.

Another significant issue which serves as a deterrent to pilot participation in the program relates to the need to compensate volunteer FFDOs for out-of-pocket expenses that they incur during initial, re-qualification and recurrent training events. These costs include hotel, meal, travel, ammunition and incidentals, which can add up to hundreds of dollars for an individual pilot. ALPA believes the government should assist the FFDOs by reimbursing them for such expenses for the following reasons:

- The program is a key component of our nation's layered aviation security system. Its value has been attested to by multiple components of the federal government, to include the Department of Homeland Security, the Transportation Security Administration and the Federal Air Marshal Service. Because global intelligence efforts continue to indicate that aviation remains a key target for terrorism, this reality must not be underestimated. The program was overwhelmingly approved by Congress because of its demonstrated need and because of the responsible vision that was articulated for developing and deploying it.

The presence of FFDOs on commercial flights is a component of the system utilized to schedule Federal Air Marshal flight coverage and by the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) in the decision-making matrix related to handling security events involving transport category aircraft. FFDOs are tracked by the government not only when they are piloting aircraft, but also when they are in transit, while deadheading, or commuting in the aviation domain in order to utilize all resources to best advantage.

- Initial training and re-qualification costs deter FFDO program applications. FFDOs frequently incur significant out-of-pocket expenses to attend basic and re-qualification training. Average travel, food and lodging costs incurred for basic training vary from \$300 to \$500. Additionally, mandatory twice-yearly firearms re-qualification costs an average of \$75 per event for most FFDOs. However, because of a lack of re-qualification sites in Alaska and Hawaii, FFDOs domiciled in those states must travel to the continental U.S. twice yearly to fulfill training requirements, which may require the pilot to use several days of personal time. As a result, these FFDOs incur lodging and food expenses averaging \$150 per re-qualification event. Because FFDOs are not reimbursed for such costs, application rates are negatively impacted. Re-qualification sites are needed in the states of Hawaii and Alaska.
- Recurrent training requirements have increased FFDOs' costs. After three years of service, FFDOs must attend a two-day recurrent training event in Atlantic City, NJ. For most FFDOs, attendance at two full days of training requires a commitment of four days of their time, plus associated travel, hotel and meal costs estimated at \$800. The FFDO program will likely lose some current participants and potential candidates as a direct result of the fact that only one training site will be used for this purpose. In times of significantly reduced pilot salaries, terminated pensions, and difficulty in obtaining leave for training, the impact on FFDOs is significant. To alleviate this problem, additional,

strategically located recurrent training sites are needed. The FAMS has indicated its awareness of this problem, and should be provided with sufficient resources to address it.

- The FFDO program is efficient and cost-effective. It supplements the FAMS and provides a high degree of deterrence at a small cost to the US government and taxpayers. The government should recognize the value that is derived from the program and do all within its power to support and grow it, rather than letting it languish and diminish.
- FFDOs have no external means for raising funds. Unlike other individuals who volunteer to assist a government entity by performing a dangerous duty (e.g., volunteer firefighters), FFDOs have no external means of raising funds to cover their personal expenses. They are not allowed to hold fundraisers, solicit funds, or even identify themselves to the public.
- Financial demands are causing FFDOs to reconsider their participation in the program. FFDOs are *volunteers* who provide a reliable level of security for the domestic aviation industry at no cost to air carriers and at minimal cost to the government. By their own choice, they subject themselves to significant government regulation, supervision, personal expense, liability and risk. The more demands for personal sacrifice they are subjected to, the greater the risk that their willingness to participate will diminish or evaporate. This fact is now being demonstrated as FFDOs learn that they must pay significantly in terms of dollars and personal time to attend recurrent training. Even before the announcement was made about the new recurrent training requirement, some FFDOs had reached a point of departure from the program because the personal cost in time and money had become too great.

Clearly, Congress did not intend for the FFDO program to mature in a fashion that would cause current FFDOs to decline further participation, or to discourage prospective candidates from applying. However, the program has reached this stage because some pilots are simply unwilling to fund this layer of national security from their own pockets any longer.

FFDOs provide a direct service to the nation and the aviation industry. The government should recognize the special nature of this program and ensure its ongoing viability by funding personal costs incurred by FFDOs related to training.

The Association has worked continuously to suggest areas of additional “fine tuning” to the FFDO program since its inception, initially with TSA and more recently with the Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) since it assimilated the program two years ago. We have outlined in a white paper on the FFDO program 12 specific areas in which the program may be enhanced (reference attachment). We recommend that Congress legislate these improvements.

Secondary Barriers

Airplane cockpits are vulnerable to breach and seizure during fortified cockpit door opening and crewmember transitions during flight. Flight and cabin crewmembers are not rigorously trained, however, to prepare and protect the integrity of the flight deck during the door opening and

closing process, and what training is provided is not standardized between airlines. To remedy this shortcoming, ALPA is actively promoting the installation of flight deck secondary barriers to protect against an attack. These barriers, which have already been installed on some aircraft by two major airlines, are lightweight devices mounted on the passenger cabin side of the flight deck door and serve to deter individuals from congregating near the door, attempting to open the door, and help to identify those who may intend harm to the flight. The barrier is not intended to prevent access to the flight deck door, but it does provide a delay which helps give the flight and cabin crew invaluable seconds to react to a threat. The barrier is used in conjunction with the proper training of crewmembers and a standardization of procedures and protocols to ensure full security.

Reinforced, or fortified, cockpit doors have added a valuable level of protection to airliner flight decks never before provided. A secondary barrier, accompanied by standardized procedures and protocols for protecting the cockpit door during those times it must be opened in flight, would significantly augment the fortified door and add an important layer of security to prevent hostile takeover of the cockpit.

ALPA has expressed and coordinated its support of a secondary barrier with ALPA member airlines, other associations and non-member airlines, and with TSA and the FAA. We have found there to be a consensus among all those contacted that the secondary barrier is a valid proposal and that such a security enhancement would bring added value to aviation security at a reasonable cost.

ALPA has worked closely with Congressman Steve Israel (D-NY) on the development of a bill, HR 3925, that would mandate the installation of secondary barriers on all Part 121 aircraft. ALPA fully supports this bill and calls on Congress to enact it promptly.

In July of this year, ALPA published a white paper titled *Secondary Flight Barriers and Flight Deck Access Procedures, A Call for Action* (reference attachment) which provides further details about this important equipment. That paper urges Congress, FAA, TSA, and industry to support secondary flight deck barriers and provide accompanying flight deck access procedures on all airliners by January 1, 2010. These barriers should be built to a standard that will delay an attack on the cockpit by at least five (5) seconds, thereby enabling crewmembers to close and secure the reinforced cockpit door.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to testify today and would be pleased to address any questions.

#